

STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY - RECOMMENDATION

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)

Subregion: NORTH **County:** LASSEN
Applicant: HONEY LAKE VALLEY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Project Title: MCCLELLAND/EAGLE LAKE RANCH APPRAISAL
Application Number: SNC 070356

PROJECT SCOPE

This project will fund the appraisal of the 1,100-acre McClelland Ranch on the north shore of Eagle Lake in order to develop a conservation easement with the landowner. The property consists of two proximate but non-contiguous parcels – one parcel of approximately 500 acres of shoreline property, and one +/- 600-acre parcel to the west and upland from the lake. The applicant will work with the landowner to identify and contract with an appraiser and develop an acquisition plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve – this appraisal is the first step to secure a conservation easement from a very willing landowner to permanently protect a significant piece of Eagle Lake shoreline and help preserve its water quality, while also preserving the working landscape. The landowner is anxious to ensure that the land is preserved for cattle ranching, and not developed, after he retires from ranching. Considerable interest has been shown over the years from agencies and conservation organizations to see that the lakeshore property is protected from development in order to help preserve the water quality of Eagle Lake, which is showing stress from reduced groundwater, increased algae, and decreased water clarity due to existing developments. The lake has high alkalinity which supports an endemic species of trout. It is expected that the final easement would include specific water protection features to maintain the low impact of the current land use. The low appraisal cost is a good allocation of SNC funds to help facilitate the overall land protection project.

The total budget for the appraisal project is \$12,700. It includes \$7,700 from SNC to hire an appraiser and for RCD grant administration costs; and \$5,000 in-kind match of the landowner's time to identify, negotiate with, and hire an appraiser.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

No letters of support were included with the application.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Identify and hire appraiser	May 2008
Complete appraisal	May 2008
Complete acquisition plan	July 2008
FINAL REPORT	August 2008

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Hire appraiser	\$7,000
Acquisition plan development and grant administration by RCD	\$700
GRAND TOTAL	\$7,700

Project Summary

Project involves conducting an appraisal on 1,100 acres on the North Shore of Eagle Lake known as the McClelland Ranch (T 33N, R11E, Sec. 11, 14, & 16) (See Appendix A). The owner of this property, Tom McClelland, is interested in putting this property into a conservation easement.

The McClelland Ranch was purchased by the McClelland Family in 1890 and has been in the McClelland family ever since. The current ownership is under the Thomas P. McClelland Trust, established by third generation McClelland owner Tom McClelland. He operates his cattle operation out of the ranch during the summer. Tom is getting up in years and because he has a grandson who is interested in continuing the livestock operation he is willing to consider placing the ranch in a conservation easement. If something were to happen to Tom, or if his grandson lost interest in raising cattle, "all bets would be off" and there would be the very real possibility of someone selling the ranch and cashing in on its high development potential. Therefore there is urgency to get an appraisal as soon as possible and begin the process of acquiring partners for a conservation easement while Tom is still healthy, in control, and willing.

The ranch is one of the few remaining private in holdings along the north shore of Eagle Lake. It is divided into two parcels of about 1,100 acres total with the almost completely developed subdivisions of Stones Landing and Bengard sandwiched in between. The east parcel is prime lake front land (500 acres +/-) and the west parcel is upland land directly adjacent to the subdivisions and has sewer and water on site (See Appendix B). Almost all the remaining north Eagle Lake shoreline is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Project will aid in restoring and conserving the Region's physical and living resources; aid in the preservation of working landscapes; and protect water and air quality. It will protect habitat for numerous endangered species and species of concern. Enforcement actions have been taken by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board against subdivisions around Eagle Lake due to development effects on groundwater, increased algae growth in the lake, and decreased water clarity of Eagle Lake. Protection of the McClelland Ranch through a conservation easement will eliminate the risk of deleterious impacts on Eagle Lake water quality from future development.

Many partners have expressed interest and support for this project including the Nature Conservancy, Lassen Land and Trails Trust, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Cooperative Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Initiative.

This application is requesting \$7,700 in SNC funds to hire a professional appraiser to appraise the value of the McClelland Ranch. Costs associated with coordinating with the appraiser, providing necessary information and administering the grant proposal will be shared between the Honey Lake Resource Conservation District and the landowner.